



# The FBI Oral History Project

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## **Interview of Former Special Agent of the FBI James W. Awe (1948-1979) Interviewed by E. Avery Rollins On November 3, 2005**

*Edited for spelling, repetitions, etc. by Sandra Robinette on March 27, 2006. Final edit with Mr. Awe's corrections by Sandra Robinette on May 26, 2006.*

E. Avery Rollins: This is E. Avery Rollins. I am interviewing James W. Awe for the Society of Former Special Agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation Oral History Program. Today is November 3, 2005. This interview is taking place at Mr. Awe's home in Bluffton, South Carolina.

Jim, when and where were you born?

James W. Awe: I was born and raised in Grand Island, Nebraska.

Rollins: How many members of your family?

Awe: I'm the only child.

Rollins: Okay. So any aunts or uncles living there, in the area?

Awe: No. I may have some cousins that are still living in that area.

Rollins: Okay.

Awe: But I left that area, right after high school when, about 19 years old, I came to Washington and went to work for the Bureau as a clerk in November of 1948.

Rollins: Okay. What was your first job with the Bureau?

Awe: It was in the Records Section as a messenger and other clerical duties, and I continued with this job until, well ... well, first let me back up and state while I was working at the Bureau, as a clerk, I went to night school at Georgetown University and then I was out for a couple of years for military service between 1952 and 1954.

Rollins: What branch of the service?

Awe: I was in the Army. That was during the Korean War. And after that service, I returned to the Bureau and continued in the clerical capacity and some clerical supervisory jobs. Then also continued at Georgetown University until I completed my degree. I also went in Agents Class in 1958.

Rollins: Okay. Going back to your time in the Army. Were you Infantry in the Army?

Awe: It was Artillery. I went through Basic Training at Fort Sill, Oklahoma, in the Artillery Division and shortly after training I was pulled aside to be a Company Clerk. I was lucky in doing it because so many of the people that I took Basic Training with went over to Korea and never did come back. I was then transferred to the CID because they knew I had worked for the Bureau as a clerk and they thought I could continue those same duties with CID. And that worked out quite well.

Rollins: Okay. You entered Training Class, how many New Agents were there in your Training Class? Approximately.

Awe: I would guess maybe 40.

Rollins: And how long was the training back during that time?

Awe: I think it was 12, 13 weeks possibly.

Rollins: Okay. Anything outstanding in your experience during training class, New Agents Training?

Awe: Not really. No, I guess there was nothing outstanding there. At that time, at Quantico, they published some post cards where it featured the facilities at Quantico. I mean this was before, of course, they moved into their new facilities.

Rollins: Right. Right.

Awe: But this is in the old facilities that they had and the photographs were interesting showing what it was like at that particular time.

Rollins: Right. Right. Okay, after you completed training what was your first assignment?

Awe: In Louisville.

Rollins: Louisville, Kentucky?

Awe: Yes. And I was there for about a year and then transferred to the Covington Resident Agency which is across the river from Cincinnati, and stayed there until my next assignment.

Rollins: And what was your next assignment?

Awe: That was in Cincinnati, Ohio, and that was one transfer where I didn't have to move because it was just across the river.

Rollins: (Laughing) Ah huh.

Awe: Yeah. Ed Mason was the SAC at the time, in Cincinnati.

Rollins: Okay. Now when did you get married? Were you married by this time?

Awe: Yes. As a matter of fact, when I left for Washington in November of '48, the girl that I was going with came out there also and we were married in January of 1949. So we've been married over 50 some years.

Rollins: Yeah. Okay.

Awe: She also worked for the Bureau as a clerk during the early '50's.

Rollins: Okay. And how long were you in Cincinnati?

Awe: About three years ... from about 1960 to '64. And in '64 I was transferred to Jackson.

Rollins: Okay. We will go in-depth on your experience in Jackson. You were in Jackson for how long?

Awe: From 1964 to '69.

Rollins: Okay. We will come back later on in the interview and just talk about your experiences in Jackson. After your assignment in Jackson, where were you transferred to?

Awe: Then I was transferred back to FBI Headquarters in Washington and I was assigned to Division 4, which then was called the Files and Communications Division. Today, I believe they call it the Records Management Division.

Rollins: Okay. And you were at Headquarters for the rest of your career?

Awe: Yes, that's correct.

Rollins: Okay. And was most of your time in Headquarters on Records Management?

Awe: Yes, the whole time was.

Rollins: Okay.

Awe: I had various duties there, including getting the Division moved to the new building, the new J. Edgar Hoover Building; and planning the space layout, and so on.

Rollins: Okay. And when you retired, what was your position?

Awe: I was a Section Chief.

Rollins: Okay. So you basically were at a high level then in Records Management?

Awe: Yes.

Rollins: Okay. Okay. After your retirement, what did you do?

Awe: I worked as a consultant for a number of years in the area of information management in security. And that included doing some work for Baltimore Gas and Electric, and their access control problems at the nuclear plant at Calvert Cliffs.

Rollins: Okay ... so I think you said you retired in 1979?

Awe: Yes.

Rollins: How long did you continue to live there in the DC area?

Awe: After retirement, we lived in the DC area almost 30 years.

Rollins: Okay. Then you, about two years ago, moved here to Bluffton, is that right?

Awe: Yes. Our daughter and her family moved to this area and we no longer had family members in the Washington area and we decided we'd move to a warmer climate and be there with them.

Rollins: Okay. In looking back at your career in the FBI, what do you think was probably the most interesting time that you had as an Agent? I know, you know, we previously discussed some of the things you did during your career, but I guess your time in Mississippi was right during the hot bed of the Civil Rights Movement and the Klan activity. Is that right?

Awe: Yes. That was probably one of the most interesting parts of my career, being assigned to Mississippi; particularly during the Civil Rights era. It was a very significant and important part of our history and it was interesting being able to take part in that ...

Rollins: You came to Mississippi in ... when now?

Awe: In the summer of 1964. It was right after the three Civil Rights workers had been killed.

Rollins: Okay.

Awe: And it was at the time that they opened the Jackson Office; so I guess I would be considered a charter member of the Jackson Office.

Rollins: Okay. How many Agents were probably in Mississippi when you came there?

Awe: In Mississippi, before they opened the office, the southern half of the state was covered by the New Orleans Office; the northern half of the state was covered by the Memphis Office. So they did have Agent personnel already there in a number of Resident Agencies throughout the state. But it was decided that an office should be opened in Jackson and they transferred in a large amount of Agents ... maybe 50, maybe 80 more Agents.

Awe: And it was interesting that the case of the three Civil Rights workers was handled separately, rather than out of the Jackson Field Office. They sent Inspector Joe Sullivan down to handle that and there must have been over 50 or some Agents that were assigned to him to handle that particular case. Now they weren't transferred there. They were there on temporary assignments from offices throughout the country; including a large number of them from the New York Office.

Rollins: Okay. So if I understand correctly then, you did not work fulltime on what has come to be known as the MIBURN investigation or the Civil Rights workers ... the disappearance of the Civil Rights workers? Is, is that right?

Awe: That's right. I didn't work fulltime on that. I worked out of the Jackson Office. However, in connection with that case, they needed a lot of photographs and they needed some exhibits and maps prepared for court. And I was able to do that and John Doar, who was the Assistant Attorney General of the Civil Rights Division, was down there at the time and he preferred to have someone local handle that if he could.

That way he could have it done the way he wanted. Usually that's handled out of the Exhibit Section at FBI Headquarters. So I spent some time in Meridian, Mississippi ... Philadelphia, Mississippi, doing that work and preparing it for court. And, as a result, introduced a lot of that evidence into court in the first trial.

Rollins: And so you were in your mid-30s during this time, I guess?

Awe: Yes.

Rollins: You would have been working in Headquarters City, in the Jackson Office itself. I guess that's where you were assigned?

Awe: An interesting aspect of that work included a large aerial photographic composite map prepared by the Naval Air Station in Meridian for the purpose of systemically searching for the bodies of the three Civil Rights Workers. I used this map as the basis for preparing the map that would be used in the trial. I used a transparent plastic material that was placed over the aerial photograph and traced the relevant areas and roads to make a more meaningful representation for court.

Awe: I traveled the roads and recorded the mileage between various areas and compared them with the local state maps and also geological survey maps for an accurate representation for court. Most of the work was done in a motel room in Meridian so I wouldn't be in the way of others working in the limited space of the Resident Agency.

Rollins: Okay. Let's talk just a little bit about your normal work activities as being an Agent assigned to a squad. Who was your Supervisor? Do you recall his name?

Awe: Yes. Roy Moore. I was assigned to his Squad.

Rollins: I see.

Awe: He was the SAC that was sent down to open the Jackson Office.

Rollins: How was it working for Mr. Moore?

Awe: It was great. I thought he was just a tremendous SAC to work for.

Rollins: What was your normal work week? I mean, you know, did you have Saturdays and Sundays off? Or, I mean, what time would you come in to work? Just, what was that experience?

Awe: That's a very good and interesting question ... because there was a lot of work to be done. And we would normally come in the regular hours of eight o'clock and when you went home that might be different. Where usually you would go home six or seven; you might stay around a lot longer. And you would work on Saturdays. And you would work on Sundays. And, as I recall, I think during the first year or so that we were there, we were pretty much working seven days a week.

Rollins: Were you able to take any time off for like vacation or anything like that?

Awe: Not during the first year or two. No. You would be able, maybe, a little time off; but, generally, no.

Rollins: How many Agents were on Roy's Squad?

Awe: Maybe ten, twelve.

Rollins: And where was the office located at that time?

Awe: That was in the bank building in Downtown Jackson across from the old Capitol Building.

Rollins: Right. That would have been the Universe Building, I think, at Capitol and State Street.

Awe: I guess that is right. But I don't recall the name "Universe Building." I think it was the First Federal and Savings Building.

Rollins: Okay. Did the office have enough cars? I mean, I'm imagining where you get a bunch of Agents transferred in you probably had to share a desk for a while, or cars, or how was that?

Awe: I think, they made available plenty of cars. I think we had enough cars for the use of the Agents. And the office ... I think we were able to provide desk space for everybody because, initially, down there, I helped Tommy Webb, who was assigned to the office and he and I worked together in the office design and setting up everything for the office.

Rollins: Okay, you indicated that you have an expertise in cameras and in doing layouts for court documents and all of that. I would assume that that occupied part of your time but did you ... I guess you spent a lot of time investigating actual Klan cases or incidents that might have occurred there, in the area?

Awe: Yes. We conducted the regular type of investigations that other offices conduct. While a lot of the investigative work pertained to Civil Rights, there were other things too. Bank robberies occurred and other crimes occurred that had to be investigated. And, yes, we did work on those types of matters.

Rollins: Were you involved in developing any Klan informants or who in the office handled that?

Awe: Of course, each Agent was responsible for trying to develop their own informants, if not Klan, for other matters too. So, each Agent participated in that function.

Rollins: Okay. Did you have a partner, anyone you worked with on a regular basis?

Awe: On some of the Civil Rights matters, yes. Particularly the marches that we had to cover; the Klan rallies that we covered, and so on. The Dahmer investigation, particularly, the person that I worked with was Jim Ingram.

Rollins: Well now, you mention the Dahmer investigation ... let's talk about that a while. Just give me a narrative on what that whole experience was.

Awe: The Dahmer investigation occurred as a result of the Klan firebombing his home near Hattiesburg, Mississippi. And the reason the Klan did this was because of Dahmer's interest in trying to help the Negro population register to vote and this was more than the Klan could take. And Sam Bowers ordered the firebombing of his home and also the death of Dahmer.

Rollins: How did the firebombing take place? What do you recall about that?

Awe: There were two automobiles filled with Klan members. They drove by his house and threw cans of gas or bottles of gas into his house. That, of course, ignited the house and as the place was burning, Dahmer tried to return fire at the Klan. His family was able to escape out a back window. But, he was seriously injured and later died the next day in the hospital.

Rollins: During the course of the investigation, how quickly did you identify the people that were involved in it?

Awe: Oh, I think that was done within several days after the investigation. But first let me back up just a little.

Rollins: Okay.

Awe: As soon as Roy Moore learned of the incident, he sent most of the Senior Resident Agents and a large staff from Headquarters, including clerical personnel, to Hattiesburg, Mississippi, and established quarters at a Holiday Inn in Hattiesburg. And that personnel stayed there until that case was completed. And I was included as one of the ones that went to Hattiesburg to work on that case.

Rollins: So how long did it take to complete the case, do you think?

Awe: Oh ... they learned what happened, who was responsible, shortly afterwards because one of the Klan members dropped his gun at the scene of the crime. So he became a very important witness and testified at the trials on that. I forgot exactly how long we were down there, maybe a couple of months. While we were there, we had Saturday night and Sunday morning off to go back home. You would be back there Sunday afternoon and they would have their meetings and assign the leads that everybody should work on, and so on.

Rollins: Okay. Who was actually the Agent in charge of that investigation?

Awe: Roy Moore.

Rollins: Roy Moore.

Awe: Roy Moore himself went down to head that particular case and he stayed down there himself. Of course, all the Senior Resident Agents, they were all very well experienced and that helped considerably in this particular matter.

I remember at the time that that happened, the office was due for inspection and I remember I was in the room at the time when Roy Moore called Al Rosen, back at the Bureau, and told him, "Do not let any Inspectors come to Hattiesburg." And he said he would not want any Inspectors down there, nor would any Inspector want to be there. And, as a result, they stayed away from Hattiesburg and let the case be investigated.

Rollins: So that was, from what you're saying, that was a pretty extreme time of intense work.

Awe: Yes, because there were a lot of interesting incidents that occurred in connection with that. During the time, the word was out by a Klansman that if any FBI Agent came to or got on my property, I would kill him ... shoot to kill.

Awe: Ingram and I happened to draw the ticket to go interview this particular person to see if he was involved in the Dahmer case or not. And as Ingram and I went to his home, it was in a rural area, he met us with a double-barrel shotgun and he said, "You Agents turn around and you better run otherwise I'm going to shoot and kill you both." Well, we immediately stepped ... one on one side and one on the other ... so there was distance between us, and he was told, "All right, you can kill one of us but the other person is going to have to kill you." His family came out on the porch, and we finally talked him down and he put down the shotgun and then we continued the interview with him.

This incident has been listed in various books – and in various ways – but the FD-302 in the Bureau file would be the best description.

Rollins: So, I guess in your judgment you came pretty close to the use of deadly force there?

Awe: Yes, we did. And we didn't realize it until afterwards and we talked about it and said, "Hey that was sort of close."

Rollins: Who was this guy? Do you recall his name?

Awe: No, I don't.

Rollins: Yeah.

Awe: There would be a 302 interview write-up on it. But I don't recall his name. In relation to that, while this was going on, his brother drove up in his pickup truck and wanted to know what was going on. And we talked with him and he said, "I don't understand why you weren't killed because my brother is one of the meanest people here and he is quick to use his gun."

Rollins: Did it turn out that this man was involved in the crime itself?

Awe: No.

Rollins: Okay.

Awe: No. It turned out that he wasn't involved in the Dahmer case. But I remember, I believe it was Whitehead that wrote in his book afterwards, that the way that this was handled showed that the Agents could not be intimidated by the Klan.

Rollins: As a result of this confrontation, did Mr. Moore, you know, did he change policy or tactics or anything like that on the way Agents conducted interviews, or the way they conducted themselves?

Awe: No, but we realized that they had a lot of fire power to use if they chose to use it ... because they were all driving around with their shotguns in the rack in the back of their pickup trucks and, we didn't have that type of fire power. We had our regular revolvers and were really no match for that type of thing.

Rollins: Yeah.

Awe: We did go back to Headquarters and got some shotguns to keep in our car.

Rollins: Eventually the Dahmer case was solved. The people were identified who were involved in that. What do you recall about that?

Awe: Before ... let me go to one other incident ...

Rollins: Sure.

Awe: ... that's similar to this. Ingram and I had to interview Devers Nix, who was the number two man in the Klan right under Sam Bowers; and as we approached his house to talk with him, he came out screaming and yelling for his wife to call the police; that the Agents were intimidating him, using profane language, and so on. And the police, of course, came and he insisted that the police arrest us. Well, the police wouldn't do that. Nix, the next day, went down to the police station and formally filed arrest warrants for Jim Ingram and myself. We went back and told Roy Moore and said, "Well, perhaps we shouldn't work in Jones County anymore because there are two arrest warrants for us down there." And Roy Moore was not amused.

Rollins: (Laughing)

Awe: He said, "You will work in Jones County and you will not allow yourselves to become arrested."

(Both Laughing)

Awe: Well, we didn't have any incidents after that and nothing came of that particular situation.

Rollins: Was there an office in Laurel at the time?

Awe: There was a Resident Agency in Laurel and Bob Lee was the Senior Resident Agent at the time. He was receiving a lot of threatening phone calls at home and he went to - I don't know if it was Sam Bowers or who, and told him on no uncertain terms that those phone calls had to stop or there would be big problems. And the word finally got out and the phone calls did stop.

Rollins: Well, while we're talking about it, were there any instances of slashed tires or anything like that the Klan may have done against the Bureau? Any incidents?

Awe: Not that I recall. There may have been. There was an incident where a rattlesnake was found in an Agent's car, and things of that nature. But I don't know who that was and it's just something I'd heard of.

Rollins: Yeah. Well we were talking about the Vernon Dahmer case ... that case was eventually solved and people charged?

Awe: Yes. I forgot how many, there were maybe 18 or so Klansmen that were actually charged in that case. And it was tried in Meridian, Mississippi, in Federal Court, as a Conspiracy case because the Federal Government cannot charge for murder. That's a State violation. But that case resulted in a hung jury and then later the State started to try the cases one by one. They had to do the cases separately. And I remember I went back and testified on a number of those cases.

Rollins: In State Court?

Awe: Yes, in State Court.

Rollins: In Hattiesburg, and there were a number of people eventually convicted of that.

Awe: Yes. There were a number of people convicted.

Rollins: Okay. Was Bowers convicted of that?

Awe: He was tried four times and it always ended in a hung jury. And then the State decided to try it later on. And I believe that was in 1998. Bowers was tried in that particular case at that time, and there were four retired Agents that went back to testify in that case, myself included because I had the photographs and the diagrams and so on.

Another Agent that testified in that case was Loren Brooks. Who, by the way, was in my New Agents Class and he was assigned to Hattiesburg Resident Agency. He was the one that found the gun at the scene of the crime. Charles Killion was another Agent that came back, he was from the Laboratory, and he testified on matters regarding the gun; the identification of it, and so on. And Jim Ingram also testified in that case.

Rollins: Okay.

Awe: I might also add that after the case was completed, we met the Dahmer family, and they thanked each of us individually for coming back to testify on that case.

Rollins: Well, I know after that length of time, it gave you a sense of satisfaction that eventually justice was being realized.

Awe: Yes. As a matter of fact, that's true. And, as a result of that, I even sent Mrs. Dahmer a letter indicating that.

Rollins: Um-hmm. Did you have any other similar investigations that you were involved in? I guess the Dahmer case was one of the largest investigations that was there in the state at that time, but I'm sure there were many other Civil Rights investigations that you were involved in.

Awe: Yes, but not of a major proportion that that was. There were other cases, and I can't recall which ones specifically, but many of them I did go out on just to do a crime scene and so on. But we also covered a lot of the marches and demonstrations, that they had in Jackson, and various parts of the state. And the Department of Justice requested that we observe and to photograph any incidents that would occur.

Awe: There were a lot of Justice Department Attorneys down there at that particular time, helping on Civil Rights matters and there were a lot of allegations of police brutality and so on. But, as a result of us being there with our cameras, not too many cases ended up as police brutality. On things where maybe somebody was hit and drew a little blood, and so on, yes we would make a photograph of that and then there would be another team of Agents that would handle the Civil Rights investigation that would follow.

Rollins: You have put together a book, a collection. If you would, just tell, tell us a little bit about that. What that consists of?

Awe: Yes. After the Dahmer trial in '98, several of the Agents asked if I had any photographs left over from the Mississippi days and I told them yes I did. And rather than just send them some copies of those photos, I decided to try to put it together and ... with some comments that would be more meaningful ... and, as a result, I had to do a little bit of research to make sure I got the right dates in and the right names, and so on.

And I used several sources of information for that, which included a book by Don Whitehead, which was the Ku Klux Klan vs. the FBI in Mississippi. Also Deke DeLoach's book about Hoover's FBI; and Jack Nelson's books about the same matter. And I also took some information from Michael Beschloss, a noted historian, because he did the background information regarding President Johnson's tapes. Those tapes were not to be released until about the year 2023 but somehow the archivist decided to release those tapes and he copied those tapes and there were some interesting conversations between Hoover and President Johnson regarding the three Civil Rights workers; the opening of the office, and so on.

This was presented in the book Taking Charge by Michael R. Beschloss. It showed this case received attention from the highest levels of government.

And I put that initially in the book to sort of set the stage as to how it all occurred. And then other pictures I had ... I made appropriate comments for them.

Rollins: So the title of this is Mississippi: A Witness to the Turbulent '60s. I see the date here, September 1999 ... that's approximately when you put it together? (*Included as an Addendum #2.*)

- Awe: Yes, I did. It was after the 1998 trial that we testified on.
- Rollins: And it's your position that this is an accurate collection of the events that took place there; that, you know, have recorded in this form for any future historical research on or whatever?
- Awe: Absolutely.
- Rollins: Okay. Let's talk a little bit about the way the Klan was infiltrated by FBI informants; what your efforts were. I'm sure Mr. Moore ... one of his primary directions to you was, you know, to know what the Klan is doing; to try to get someone on the inside to find out what's happening; when the marches are going to be, or whatever ... what was your experience in that?
- Awe: Agents were responsible for trying to develop informants regarding the Klan and many of them did have some good informants. And, as a result, it was informants that told the Bureau Agents where the three bodies were buried in the case of the three Civil Rights workers. And money was the enticement. I believe there was about 30 thousand dollars that was paid to the informants for that particular thing.
- Rollins: While I would not want to get into identifying who any of the informants were or anything like that because they are still protected but, you know, you mentioned Tommy Webb. I knew Tommy, and I know that he had a couple of very high level informants, but I'm assuming that it was the use of informants that enabled the Bureau to basically infiltrate the Klan to know what was going on, to perhaps, like you say, solve the crime of the missing Civil Rights workers. Anything specific come to mind regarding that, about any of the people that may have been able to furnish that kind of information?
- Awe: Not specifically.
- Rollins: Okay. Okay. During the time that you were there, I know it put a lot of stress on all the Agents working there, working under those conditions and, and the families too. Did your family members have any problems with neighbors or school people, or anything like that ... just because you were working as an Agent?

- Awe: Not really. We lived in Jackson at the time and Jackson's a very cosmopolitan type of city and we had very nice neighbors. Some neighbors from various parts of the country and the family really didn't experience anything that was bad in that regard at all.
- Rollins: Do you know of the other Agents working there in the state if any of them had any problems like that?
- Awe: Nothing that I can specifically remember. I think initially when a lot of Bureau Agents were sent to Mississippi, there was some resentment. We were not well liked initially. But I really can't recall the problems that other people have had. I can only speak to my own.
- Rollins: Okay. There's been a lot of issues come up about FBI responsibility in handling Civil Rights matters. A lot of complaints from the African-American community that the FBI did not provide them protection and did not do what they wanted to be done down there during these turbulent times. Do you have any thoughts or any recollection of instances like that?
- Awe: No. Well, generally, they wanted protection ... the various people that came down there would march and demonstrate. It was not within the Bureau's jurisdiction to provide protection. And we weren't in the position to provide protection. Maybe a hundred Agents in the area, we couldn't provide protection. That's a local matter. (*See Addendum #3.*)
- And that was one of the initial problems, I guess, in opening the office, is that there was a breakdown in law enforcement. And the Klan sort of took over and that's when President Johnson told Hoover to go down himself and open the office and meet with the Governor. He told the Governor, at the time, that there would not be any interference from the Federal Government as long as he could maintain law and order and get everything under control. I recall that Hoover also gave Governor Paul Johnson, the names of several Klan members that were in the Highway Patrol. And he got rid of them and as a result there was a good cooperation between local and Federal officials.
- Rollins: Well that brings an interesting point. For the most part, what were your relations like with the local law enforcement - deputy sheriffs, or city policemen, or whatever?

Awe: I think, generally, pretty good. After we went around and talked to the various ones, it was generally pretty good. There would be isolated situations. I imagine that the people that worked out of the Meridian Resident Agency would have problems over in Philadelphia, Mississippi, with Sheriff Lawrence Rainey and Cecil Price and some of those people. But I don't recall specifically what the problems were.

Later on I became a Police School Instructor and I would go around to the various police agencies and conduct classes on various law enforcement topics. And I really didn't recall any real animosity or things of that nature.

Rollins: Now a lot of the Agents assigned down there, during this time, were from the south originally and I was just wondering, did you see any form of Government discrimination by these southern Agents directed against Blacks? Or were they pretty much even-handed in their association with them?

Awe: No, I think they were very even-handed. There was no discrimination by southern Agents. The Agents all worked together and that type of problem did not exist at all.

Rollins: Okay. Well, in looking at your time down there, how long were you in Mississippi?

Awe: Until 1969.

Rollins: Okay. So you were there for about five years?

Awe: Yes.

Rollins: I guess that was a pretty turbulent time. You worked probably seven or eight years worth of time in that five years, I would guess.

Awe: (Laughing)

Rollins: But, was Roy Moore still down there when you left or had he transferred?

Awe: He was still SAC in the Jackson Office when I was transferred back to Headquarters. And, shortly after that, he retired. I'm not sure of the exact date he retired.

Rollins: Okay. We are continuing. You have alluded to an Agent named Jim Ingram. What did Jim do later on in the Bureau, after he left Jackson?

Awe: After he left Jackson, he had a number of positions. He served in the New York Office, I think as an SAC; and maybe the Chicago Office. I can't remember.

Rollins: As SAC in Chicago?

Awe: Yes. So he had several high positions in, in the Bureau before he retired. And he returned to Mississippi.

Rollins: Okay. What about the other Agents that you have mentioned here that were in Mississippi during that time? Joe Sullivan, I think, you mentioned. What did Joe do?

Awe: Joe was still in Jackson at the time I left. I'm not sure where he was transferred after that. Perhaps New York. And after he got back to New York he did some consulting work, yes.

Rollins: Any other personalities that you recall from down there during that time?

Awe: Well a number of Agents that I had worked with ... and one that was in Cincinnati where I was at the time, was John Puddister. We were transferred to Jackson at the same time. As a matter of fact, our furniture was on the same truck.

Rollins: Oh yeah.

Awe: Yes. And he helped on a number of these investigations. I think even the Dahmer investigation, because John was a fingerprint expert and he helped me on some crime scene work, on the Dahmer case, initially. I remember Hal Ratchford. We worked together on a lot of the marches and demonstrations.

Rollins: Okay. Who was the Agent in Meridian that was basically the Senior Resident Agent and who was most heavily involved in the three Civil Rights workers investigation?

Awe: That was John Proctor.

Rollins: Okay.

Awe: And just a wonderful person and, unfortunately, he died at an early age. But he was the person that was really in charge over there at Meridian. I forgot how many Resident Agents that worked for him. Frank Watts was one, who has since also died. Don Cesare and Jack Rucker were other Agents that were in Meridian at the time. And there were others too; I just can't think of their names offhand. But they worked closely with Joe Sullivan over there because they knew their way around in that area and John Proctor was responsible for a lot of the good work over there. Joe Sullivan, the Inspector in Charge, was well respected and did an excellent job.

Rollins: Okay. All right. We are going to take a short break right now. We will continue the interview at a later time.

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Rollins: This is Avery Rollins. The time is approximately 1:35 pm. We are continuing the interview of Jim Awe. The first part of the interview we were covering investigations conducted in Mississippi while Jim was an Agent there in the late '60s.

Jim, you mentioned that the Wharlest Jackson investigation was one that you were involved in as far as taking photographs and things like that. What, what do you recall about that?

Awe: He was Wharlest Jackson, an employee of the Armstrong Rubber Company, a tire company in Natchez. He took a job that no white person had previously held. And for that the Klan bombed his car. When he got in his car and drove it away, it was bombed, and, of course, he was killed. And a number of Agents went to Natchez to do some initial work on the investigation. And I, basically, worked on the crime scene in taking photographs of what happened and made necessary drawings for any future court presentation that might be necessary.

Rollins: I guess you actually took scenes in the morgue or took photographs at the morgue?

Awe: No. The person at the morgue had already taken that photograph and had given it to me. Otherwise I would have.

- Rollins: Okay. And at the time you left Mississippi to transfer out, that case had still not been solved or at least there had not been any prosecution on it. Is that correct?
- Awe: That's correct. There were a number of Agents that were working on it; but, to the best of my knowledge, it has not been solved.
- Rollins: Okay. And then you also mentioned that you were involved in taking crime scene photographs at the death of Viola Liuzzo in Alabama, I guess. Is that right?
- Awe: There were two Agents from the Jackson Office; myself and Conrad Hassell. We were sent on the Selma march, to observe and photograph any incident that occurred on that particular march. In relation to that, I think just several days after that, or maybe it was just a day, Viola Liuzzo was traveling in a car to Montgomery, Alabama, and had a Negro in the car with her and she was shot by Klansmen. So there were a number of Agents there and Conrad Hassell and myself, they asked us to stay over and work on that investigation. And actually what we did, we were looking for any evidence along the scene where it occurred along the highway.
- Rollins: And that case was solved almost immediately, I guess.
- Awe: Yes. And, again, that was done by an informant but I don't know the details of what really occurred. And after we performed our initial work there, we went back to the Jackson Office.
- Rollins: Okay. In looking back at your time in Jackson and working with the other Agents in that particular turbulent period, are you satisfied with the work you did? Do you think that there were any major failures or anything like that, that the Bureau was involved in?
- Awe: That's a good question and there would be nothing that I am aware of that were failures on the part of the Bureau. Of course, you can always look back and say that there are things that you can do better. But I think the Bureau did a very good job in Mississippi. And I know there have been a lot of accusations made that they should have defended a lot of the Civil Rights workers that came down there or things of that nature; but that really wasn't within the Bureau's jurisdiction to do that.

- Rollins: In other words, the Bureau had no authority to perform protective duties for a private citizen or anything.
- Awe: That's exactly right. And Mr. Hoover had made statements along this line previously. And I think even President Johnson, in his telephone conversations that were recorded in Michael Beschloss's book, were along those lines and that he said we're not going to protect people going down there. (*See Addendum #3.*)
- Rollins: And if you were basically working six and a half days a week, you didn't have much time for anything other than Bureau work?
- Awe: That's exactly right.
- Rollins: Okay. After you completed your assignment in Mississippi, you were transferred back to Headquarters. Is that right?
- Awe: Yes. I was. That was in 1969.
- Rollins: Okay. And tell us what you recall from that experience.
- Awe: Well, I was transferred to Division 4, which then was called the Files and Communications Division. Today, I believe it was known as the Records Management Division. And I performed supervisory work there and later became a Section Chief in that Division.
- Rollins: At the time that you were Section Chief there, approximately how many employees did you have working for you?
- Awe: Over 500 employees. I had two Agent Unit Chiefs and maybe eight or ten Clerical Supervisors who, in effect, were Unit Chiefs and two other Agent Supervisors.
- Rollins: And what were you basically responsible for? What was Records Management; what was your job? (*See Addenda #4, #5, #6.*)
- Awe: Basically to provide record processing service, maintenance and disposition matters for all of the FBI files.
- Rollins: All the FBI investigations?

Awe: Not the investigations, but all the files, in the Central Records System which includes all investigative, personnel, administrative and general files.

Rollins: Yeah. Um-hmm.

Awe: We handled all of the files and provided maintenance to the files; and other related work. It's interesting in that the Bureau had a vast records system. It's referred to as the Central Records System. And we had an index of over sixty million cards, at that particular time; over seven thousand file cabinets, with about six million files.

We performed all the name check requests for other government agencies under Executive Order 10450. Those were the forms that people would fill out for government positions. They were all sent to the Bureau and had to be searched in the Bureau Indices to see what information would be in Bureau files. There were various other Supervisory Agent personnel in another Division that would review the files and dictate the results for the requesting agency. We would receive about ten thousand of those forms a day. And that was quite a chore to do that. We had employees that would search the Index and write the file numbers down that were applicable to that particular form. That would then go to a file review group who would pull the files and review those files to see if they were pertinent to that particular name; and then those files would be sent to another Division that would dictate the reports that would go out to the requesting agency.

Rollins: Well. To put it in right perspective, this had to be done manually.

Awe: This was a manual operation. It was entirely a manual operation and it was very labor intensive.

Rollins: In other words, the names would be on an index card. Describe what an index card is.

Awe: An index card is a three by five inch card, that is typed from names listed in documents that have been marked for indexing. If there were any identifying information in the report, they would also include that in the card, including what state it's from, and so on.

AWE: So when you searched the index you could eliminate the cards that were not in a particular locality. For example, the name John Smith, there would be a lot of references on that name.

Rollins: And you would hope that the cards were filed alphabetically so that in searching them, that you would have access to at least all the names that were there in the files.

Awe: Yes. Anything pertinent in Bureau records would be indexed. And, the card would be in the index. That's why it was called the Central Records System. (*See Addendum #4.*)

Rollins: Okay. I think it was part of your experience, too, that when your Division was moved to the new J. Edgar Hoover Building, that you had to move all the files and records. Where were they located originally, that you're talking about?

Awe: Yes. Prior to the move to the new J. Edgar Hoover Building, the Bureau was split up into numerous locations throughout the city; but basically the Justice Department Building. That contained the index and a lot of other records associated with it, but the files itself were in the Ident Building. The same building where all the fingerprints were maintained.

Rollins: And so when the Hoover Building was open for business, basically you had to oversee moving, moving your Division over there, plus the files too?

Awe: Yes, one of my responsibilities when I transferred back to Headquarters, was the space planning for the new building.

Rollins: Tell us about that.

Awe: While I was familiar with some aspects of the Bureau records, there are a lot of subtleties involved. I was familiar with it because I worked there as a clerk prior to being an Agent and I did review and study other parts of the records operation. So when we did move to the new building we could move using more efficient procedures in the new building.

Often procedures are dictated because of the location that you're in, or the configuration of the space. But, going into a new building, we thought we could improve the operation by designing procedures without strict space limitations.

Awe: As a result, I did draw plans for all of the Division functions and the location of every cabinet ... file cabinets and index cabinets. But I did have a large staff that assisted when it was moved. It had to be precisely moved in the right spot because you couldn't get any cabinet out of sequence or it would cause a lot of problems.

Rollins: You were Section Chief there at the time the first discussions of automation were going on. What do you recall about that? (*See Addendum #4, #5, #6, #7.*)

Awe: Yes. There, there was another Agent that initially worked with the, the topic of automation, Bill McCoy. And he was later Deputy Assistant Director. He and I worked together on the basic automation aspects and then I took it over. We were examining the possibility of automating the General Index ... the sixty million card index. And making trial searches and trial runs to see if, in fact, you could make an automated search without too many false drops. That is, too many index references that would be listed by the computer that an employee could eliminate in a manual search. In other words, you wouldn't list all the John Smiths, only those that would be relevant to the item that you're searching. And it was concluded that, yes, that could be done; an automated search was practical. Then we conducted several pilot programs to start an automated search to the index.

We started at one particular point in time and collected all new incoming information in machine format. So at some point, say 20 years later, it could be used as an automated index.

Rollins: Okay.

Awe: The database would be large enough for it. Prior to that time, we did several other automated projects. One was on the personnel files for all the FBI employees. It wasn't that we had the information in the files automated, it was just the file charge-out procedure for the personnel files. In other words, it worked much the same as the airlines reservation system. They would all be there and only those that were charged out would be listed in the database as a charge-out. So that was one of the first systems that we tried and it was successful. It was called PARS, the Personnel Automated Record System. (*Photo on next page.*)

Awe: Then we automated the abstracts by capturing that information, and then we applied that same charge out system from the personnel files to all of the investigative files; and that was successful. And then the next step was continuing with the automation of the General Index.

Rollins: At the time that you left and retired, in 1979, what was the status of automation of Bureau records, as you recall?

Awe: The status of the records for automation at that time was rather limited because there was a limit to the technology at that particular point in our history. At least technology that was affordable. The Bureau looked at various aspects of automation. And I looked at various aspects that could be applied to our Division.

One of them was digitizing text data by using optical memories. I worked with people from ARPA, the Advanced Research Project Agency. A Dr. Craig Fields was in charge of that process at the time. He was also working with CIA and NSA on similar projects. And we were really looking at digitizing the records and what could be done. At that point, the relevant exploitable technology was there for capturing a lot of information in machine format and digitizing text data. And you would capture it at the density of three times ten to the eighth bits per square inch ( $3 \times 10^8$ ), which was a very high-density storage. And which, today, has really resulted in our CDs. At that time, there were three companies that were ready to go forward with that technology. AMPEX was one. Another company called Digital Recording and the other was N.V. Phillips of Holland. And I think ARPA funded the N.V. Phillips project because it was a circular disk and it would let you get at the information on a random basis. And that is the one, which, I believe, really ended up as the CDs as we know them today.

Rollins: Uhm.

Awe: But that really wasn't the state of the automation at the time. The automation of the records at the time was just the charge out system, the abstracts, and a pilot project on the index. And without getting really involved in some detail here, the index was separated into two parts. You could do that on the basis of the date on the cards. And through the surveys that we made, we determined that the majority of the searches in the index could relate to just 20 years back.

Awe: It wasn't necessary, except in certain Security cases, to go all the way back. So that was the start of the automated index. They captured new, incoming information in machine format; and then we were hopeful, at some point, we could go back and convert a portion of the index. And some of that was converted ... a portion of the index ... but, at the time I left, that was, of course, not completed. And I never did know after that how much of it was really automated. I assume that, today, that they can make machine searches in an automated fashion.

But, I'm trying to think of some of the other, other processes and I'll have to go back to that.

Rollins: Okay. Part of the time that you were there you dealt with destruction of files, with the old Bureau files, or whatever. (*See also Addendum #4.*)

Awe: Well, yes. And that became quite a controversial issue. But we realized at the beginning, when I started anyway, particularly from a space point of view, that the Bureau records were growing at a very rapid pace and you just couldn't keep adding floor after floor of file cabinets. And, at some point, something had to be done with the old records.

I had a lot of contacts with the NARS (The National Archives and Records Service) and with the Archivist of the United States. They are the ones that control all Government records, and provide what disposition can be made of all Government records. And we arrived at what we thought was a reasonable solution to the matter, in designating certain whole files that could be destroyed.

For example, old car cases that went back to the 1920s, and so on; which didn't resolve in much of an investigation. And those kind of files took up a lot of space. We thought that certain files in that category, and other related categories, could be destroyed. And, as a result, we created what's called a Records Control Schedule for all FBI records. And it listed in that control schedule the description of all of the records and how the destruction could be accomplished. That control schedule was published in the "Federal Register." In response to the Freedom of Information and Privacy Act, all government agencies had to publish their records a list all of their records.

Rollins: What kind of resolution did you have to this? Did the program start whereby certain files could be destroyed?

Awe: No, not really. Because there were a lot of Congressional inquiries and, as a result of Freedom of Information and Privacy Act and lawsuits of various types, the records were not really destroyed.

Rollins: Okay.

Awe: In Field Offices, yes. Certain records in the Field Offices were destroyed on the basis that a copy or summary of substance would be in Headquarters. The cases in the field that didn't result in real cases, those kinds of records could be destroyed.

Rollins: Did you have occasion to appear before Congressional Committees regarding this?

Awe: Yes. This particularly happened after the death of Mr. Hoover. There was a Congressperson by the name of Abzug from New York. *Note: This was a hearing before a Sub-Committee of the Committee on Government Operations, House of Representative, 94<sup>th</sup> Congress. December 1, 1975. (See Addendum #4.)*

Rollins: Um-hmm.

Awe: This Committee conducted a hearing into Bureau files, recordkeeping and what happened to the Hoover files that were kept in his office, and so on. My Assistant Director at the time was Jack McDermott and there was another person, Hunter Helgeson (Deputy Asst. Director, Division 5), who used to work in the Jackson Office by the way ... he was with the Intelligence Division ... and myself. The three of us appeared together before the Abzug Committee. Mr. McDermott was able to answer most of the questions; and the questions that Hunter Helgeson and myself responded to were simple yes or no type of questions. But I was there for any details that might be required regarding the records system.

Rollins: Okay. Regarding the so-called Hoover files, what were they supposed to consist of and do you have any knowledge about their existence?

Awe: I do not have specific knowledge but there were other people who went before the Abzug Committee, that testified regarding this topic. Particularly Helen Gandy, who was Mr. Hoover's secretary. And John Mohr, who was one of the Associate Directors; and several other people who testified regarding the Hoover files. Actually, the ones that were called personal and confidential, from my understanding, were just several file drawers of personal information that Mr. Hoover had and Miss Gandy destroyed those records. And the rest of them were records that Hoover decided to keep in his office because they related to prominent people on background investigations. He did not want those records out in the regular file area where other people could see them and read their background and get hold of phone numbers, that just wouldn't be good to let out. So, for that reason, those files were kept up there. I know there were a lot of allegations made about Hoover using this information against other people but, in my view, that did not happen.

Rollins: Do you have any direct personal knowledge about these files? About the existence of the files?

Awe: No, other than that the files ... the ones that Miss Gandy didn't personally handle ... they were taken and put in the regular records system files. So they were sequenced in with all of the other records.

Rollins: Okay.

Awe: As far as I know, the index cards to them were always in the General Index.

Rollins: Okay. Let me ask you this. What would your position have been at the time that these files were taken and sequenced in the regular, would you have been Section Chief then? This would have been '72, '73?

Awe: Seventy-two ... probably not.

Rollins: Okay. You would have been a Unit Chief?

Awe: A Unit Chief then. Yes.

Rollins: Okay. All right. But it's your understanding that the so-called secret Hoover files still exist and they are actually in ...

Awe: Part of the Central Records System. They were never destroyed ... and it's not likely they ever will be.

Rollins: Okay. Okay. All right, do you recall anything regarding the new rules on Freedom of Information; the Privacy Act that came into existence along about that time, somewhere in, around the mid-'70s ...

Awe: Mid-'70s.

Rollins: Right. What do you recall about that regarding your operation?

Awe: There were an awful lot of questions regarding Bureau files. And I had close contact with many of the Agent Supervisors that worked in the Freedom of Information Privacy Act Section because they had to know some detailed information regarding Bureau records and also the Office of Legal Counsel. So I had pretty close contact with those people regarding answering inquiries on Bureau records.

Rollins: Okay. But the newly formed Freedom of Information Unit was not part of your Section?

Awe: No. That was not part of my Section ... that was another Section that was added to our Division ...

Rollins: Okay.

Awe: ... and Alan McWright was designated as the Section Chief of that new Section.

Rollins: Okay. You mentioned something about you were interviewed by a reporter for the Wall Street Journal.

Awe: Oh yes. Because there was so much attention being paid to Bureau files at the time and because of the Freedom of Information and Privacy Acts, there was a reporter for the Wall Street Journal by the name of Jonathan Kwitny. And he came to the Bureau and I was the one that was designated to talk with him and take him around and explain the Bureau records system to him, and so on. He also spent a lot of time with Al McWright in the Freedom of Information and Privacy Act Section and there was an article that appeared on the first page of the Wall Street Journal (September 27, 1978) as a result of that interview.

Rollins: Okay. During the time that you worked there ... we'll call it the Records Management Division ... what do you think were some of the greatest challenges that you had to handle?

Awe: Well, number one was moving into the new building, planning the space, refining procedures, and drawing the plans. That took a lot of work and analysis to make sure everything worked smoothly. This was in addition to my regular supervisory duties and it also required considerable overtime work.

Number two, the automation of the records was a big, big project, that required an ongoing analysis of procedures and requirements.

Rollins: Okay. Did you ever have occasion to spend any one-on-one time with Mr. Hoover?

Awe: Yes. That would go back to the 1960s when I was in the Cincinnati Office. When I went in for In-Service Training. I remember the SAC at the time, Ed Mason, told me, "Yes, you request to go in and see the Director." So, I did, along with several other Agents, and I was in his office. We each went in separately. I can't remember how long. We had an interesting conversation and at some point, he takes over the conversation and then let's you know when it's time to leave. But it was a very interesting conversation.

I mentioned to him that a lot of people we deal with want to know, well, have you ever met the Director. And I told him now I'd be able to say, "Yes, I have."

Rollins: And, as I understand, a lot of Agents were reluctant to have that personal meeting with Hoover.

Awe: Yes, that's very true because if there was something that he didn't like about your demeanor, or perhaps something that you were wearing that he didn't like, it would not go well for you and could have an adverse affect on your record.

Rollins: Yeah. Okay. You retired in, in 1979 as a Section Chief in Records Management. At the time you retired, who was the head of the FBI?

Awe: William Webster.

Rollins: Okay.

Awe: And he was very good. I liked him. I remembered that at one point I had to brief him on some information that he had to go to Congress and testify about. Perhaps regarding records. And he was a very quick study.

Rollins: Okay. Who was your Assistant Director at that time?

Awe: There were a number of Assistant Directors, during the time I was there. First, Sax Tavell, was Assistant Director. After that, Frank Waikart, who was the one who had the real records experience from the very beginning. After that it was John Marshall, and then Jack McDermott, Bill Bailey, Hal Bassett, Andy Decker, Wally LaPrade. I didn't name them in order, but they were Assistant Directors in Division 4 at the time. I was there. They had a large change over of Assistant Directors. I had a very good relationship with all of them.

Rollins: We're going back to Assistant Directors ... when you first came into the Bureau as a clerk ... you said that was in 1948, I think?

Awe: 1948, November '48.

Rollins: Do you remember who any of the Bureau officials were then?

Awe: Yes, as a matter of fact I do. Of course, besides Hoover and Tolson. At that time there were just seven Divisions and there was an Assistant Director by the name of Tracy who was in charge of Division 1, the Ident Division; Hugh Clegg, who, by the way, was from Mississippi ...

Rollins: From Mississippi, right.

Awe: Yes. He was in charge of the Training and Inspection Division. An Assistant Director by the name of Glavin, who was in charge of Division 3, the Administrative Division. Division 4 was Lou Nichols; and Division 5, the Intelligence Division, was Mickey Ladd; and Division 6, the Criminal Division, Al Rosen; and Division 7, Walt Harbo, for the Laboratory. And we just had the seven Divisions.

Rollins: Right. Right. In looking back over your long and varied career with the Bureau, you know, we've covered a lot of the highlights, what are your personal feelings about your service with the FBI. The career you made and your whole experience?

Awe: Well, it was a very good experience. After working there as a clerk, before I went into Agents Class and after I graduated from Georgetown, I was thinking well no, I really want to get out in the business world and see what it's all about. And then I thought again, no, I want to go through Agents Class and see what that's about. And after you get in there and serve as an Agent for a while, you like it; time goes real fast, and I can look back on it now and say it was a very satisfying career. I absolutely have no regrets because I didn't do something else. And the people that you work with are just so great and it was a great career.

Rollins: Your wife's name is?

Awe: Elva ... E-l-v-a. And she worked for the Bureau in the early 1950s, before I went into the military service in the Administrative Division, for Lee Trotter, Sax Tavel, C. Ray Davidson and Jim Adams – to name a few.

Rollins: Okay. And you have two children.

Awe: Two children, yes.

Rollins: And they are.

Awe: A daughter, Karen Menzies, and she lives in Bluffton, South Carolina. I have a son, Steven Awe. He is in the military service. He's a full Colonel and a periodontist, and also Commander of all dental facilities in Fort Sam Houston, Texas.

Rollins: Okay. Well, I think we're going to end this portion of the interview for right now and we may come back and revisit some of this later on.

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Rollins: Continuing the interview of Jim Awe ... you had occasion Jim, to be the Agent who broke in a first office Agent named Aubrey Lewis. Give us the story on that.

Awe: Yes. That's a very interesting story. Aubrey Lewis was the first black Agent that the Bureau had. Of course they had, before that, two black Agents, Sam Noyette and Crawford. Crawford was the chauffeur and Sam Noyette was the one that stood outside of Hoover's office and let people in and so on. They were not working Agents in the sense that we know about it.

The first black Agent was Aubrey Lewis. And he was sent to the Cincinnati Office as his first office, and I was designated as the person to show him around for the first couple of weeks; the same type of thing that happens to all other New Agents. And I took him around to introduce him to people like Stan Shortel, who was the Chief of Police in Cincinnati at the time; and other people in the community. And Aubrey was a real fine gentleman and met people well and, in addition to that, he was an All-American football player from Notre Dame.

Rollins: During the time that you were breaking him in, did you have any, or did he have any experience where he was not treated properly ... restaurants or anything like that?

Awe: I recall an interesting occasion. There was a restaurant which was very near the office, known as Ted Kluszewski's Steak House. (He was a noted Cincinnati baseball player.) I might say this was in 1963 before the Civil Rights Act of 1964 which dealt with public accommodations. And I said, "Well all right Aubrey, let's go in here for lunch." And it's a type of place where blacks really never did go, even in downtown Cincinnati. I said, "Aubrey, if you're going to work in this city, you've got to be able to go anywhere you need to go without any problems." And we did go in there; it raised a lot of eyebrows, but nothing was really said and, as far as I know, he didn't have any problems. I don't think we could have taken him to Mississippi.

Rollins: Yeah.

Awe: It wouldn't have worked out.

Rollins: Yeah. Where's Aubrey now?

Awe: Aubrey left the Bureau, I understand, shortly after that and I heard he became a Vice President for Woolworth.

Rollins: Okay.

Awe: And I don't know what he's doing now.

Rollins: Okay. What was the other item?

Awe: Ohhh ... The Bureau couriers?

Rollins: Yeah.

Awe: Mail?

Rollins: Yeah. Bureau couriers.

Awe: Yes. Another thing that I recall, right after I first returned to Headquarters, one of my duties included the Bureau Courier Service. They're the ones that delivered mail to the various other Government agencies throughout the city. And one of my employees mentioned, it's Christmas time, and the agencies were having their Christmas parties in the afternoon before Christmas, and there really won't be any need to make mail pickups. And I thought, well okay, just don't go.

And then another one suggested, "Well, you better put that in a memo and send it up." And I said, "All right, I'll do that." And I dictated a short paragraph memo and two hours later, the memo was back on my desk with Tolson's initials and "OK/ H." (He always put a period after the "H" – and he was the only one who used blue ink on the mail) and some other innocuous comment. But it just shows you how fast mail can travel around Headquarters and I concluded this must have been a slow mail day for that kind of quick response.

But it was a very effective and efficient system that the Bureau had, and the mail, as it went from one place to another or from one Section to another, was time stamped. It was not a good idea to sit on the mail. Decisions were made very quickly.

When you sent a memo up you better be sure that it's the right thing to do. Because eventually it will get to Tolson or to Hoover, unless some Assistant Director agrees to it beforehand. It was a very effective and efficient system.

- Awe: And I remember one other occasion. John Mohr, who was Assistant to the Director in charge of all of the administrative type Divisions, had to go up on the Hill and testify on something in Congress and he was gone for the afternoon. Of course, he didn't get to work his mail until he got back late in the afternoon or the evening. And Hoover noted that that was too late for his response and Mohr's comment was that he was up in the Hill testifying and Hoover said, "That's no excuse." So, you heard of interesting things like that by the comments that were on the mail.
- Rollins: And you mentioned that in Executive conference, all the Assistant Directors agreed to a certain item?
- Awe: Oh yes. You would see this on the mail because Hoover would make these blue ink comments on the mail. For example, the Assistant Directors at an Executive Conference would agree unanimously "this is the way something should be done." And then it would get to Hoover and he'd put on the mail, "Well, I have a dissenting view." And, of course, that's the view that prevailed.
- Rollins: Okay. Basically I guess what that says is that where you have one person with that much control, quick decisions could be made and ...
- Awe: Yes.
- Rollins: ... and you knew that Hoover would stand by those decisions.
- Awe: That's it exactly. It was a very effective and efficient system. And answers to questions were handled very quickly. I hope that by mentioning these anecdotes, no one would interpret it as an unfavorable reflection on Mr. Hoover. I think they are interesting and show a decisive management style. I have always had the utmost respect for him, supported him and the Bureau, and was proud to be part of the FBI team.
- Rollins: Very interesting. Okay. Well, once again, we're going to terminate this interview, possibly to be continued at a later date.